

## **The Education – Unemployment Relationship in the Slovak Republic: An Analysis with Special Regard to Economic Education**

### **Abstract**

The contribution is focused on the analysis between education and unemployment in the Slovak Republic. There is a reciprocal proportion between education and unemployment: the lower education, the higher unemployment. It is especially typical of long-term unemployment which is highest at the lowest level of basic education. In Slovakia, young people's unemployment rate in the age range of 15–24 is three times higher in comparison with the OECD countries. The situation necessitates a quick solution. The education level of people and a constant rise of qualifications belong to basic assumptions needed for a decrease of unemployment, an increase in labour market flexibility, and a development of national economy.

*Key words: Unemployment, long-term unemployment, rate of unemployment, education, education level, qualification, labour market, economy transformation, mobility of workforce, higher education*

### **1. The characteristics and the development of unemployment during the transformation period in the Slovak Republic**

Unemployment is a serious problem worldwide. In Slovakia it has appeared as an accompanying phenomenon and a negative result of political and economic transformations after the year 1989. Since then it has been on the rise and has had a negative impact on the functioning of society as well as on the life of citizens. Before 1989 there was the so-called full employment as well as the duty to work was embodied in legislation. That is the reason why it has been a new and unex-

pected phenomenon for our society and which the citizens are not well prepared for. The state authorities have not yet been able to overcome it successfully.

Unemployment has a very negative influence on both persons and the state as a whole. From a person's point of view losing a job causes a remarkable reduction of income and a decrease of the standard of life. Long-term unemployment has the worst effects because it leads to a loss of professional skills and degradation of achieved education. It causes social isolation of an unemployed person, and possibly of his/her family as well. Many unemployed people suffer mentally, physically, socially, and materially.

From the economic point of view, unemployment is responsible for a loss of production, income and a state financial resource waste. Unemployment leads to the deficit of public budget. Losses in taxes as well as in social insurances are responsible for the decrease of the budget income while unemployment and social benefits burden the income. There is a correlation between unemployment and an increase in social problems. (Čejková, M., 1998, p. 23)

Rievajová defines unemployment as a "social-economic phenomenon, which is connected with the existence of the labour market". It is both a consequence and a display of imbalance between labour demand and labour supply on the market. (Rievajová, E. – Stanek, V. – Krausová, A., 1997, p. 11) It reflects an insufficient use of available labour on the labour market. The unemployment rate is the indicator of national economic health, economic functioning and it acts as a social indicator because unemployment is so often connected with such negative phenomena as pathological dependencies, criminality, divorce, poverty, poor mental and physical health, etc. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, there are three conditions to be fulfilled in order to use the term "unemployment". (Mareš, P., 1994, p.11):

1. ability to work (age, health conditions, personal situation)
2. willingness to work (dissatisfaction with conditions, search for a new job)
3. lack of employment (despite skills and willingness to work, a person cannot find a suitable employment)

In February 1990, when unemployment started to be registered, the unemployment rate stood at the level of 0.07 per cent. In the second half of 1991, it reached 11.8 per cent. Arms industry conversion, more expensive input of import in the manufacture that heavily depended on raw materials and the breakdown of Eastern markets led to a deterioration of the macroeconomic level of the whole economy in the Slovak Republic. In 1992 there was a 2 per cent decrease of unemployment, a situation that was caused by the shortening of the unemployment benefit period and by massive implementation of active policy labour market tools.

In 1993 unemployment was on the rise and that situation prevailed until 2002. In July 2002 there was a radical change on the labour market. For the first time in the past 6 years there was a drop in the registered number of the unemployed standing at 506 998, which represents a number under the level reached in 1999 (510 955), 2000 (549 184), 2001 (510 671). According to the data of the National Job Office, the reason for this positive change laid in the lowest influx of the registered unemployed in July 1997 and, at the same time, the highest ebb tide from the registration rolls. This trend was influenced by a low influx of graduates and school-leavers as well as by the intensification of active policy labour market and an increase of vacancy influx. In August, there was also a drop in the number of the registered unemployed when the record reached the level of under 500,000 people, exactly 492 607 people, for the first time.

From January the average length of the registered unemployed oscillated at the level of 14.0 months, this meant a prevalence of long-term unemployment. Unemployment reached the level of 48.19 per cent at the end of August, a trend that is not desirable. In August 2002 the rate of registered unemployment was 17.21 per cent, a decrease at 0.58 of a percentage point.

Despite the decrease of involuntary unemployment and a slight increase of employment in 2001, Slovakia belongs to countries with the poorest results on the job market within the member states of the OECD. Although the rate of active population is maintained at an average, the rate of employment stands among the lowest while the rate of unemployment is among the highest within the OECD. There is a strain on workforce reserves in the regions with a high rate of growth and in highly professional jobs but also mass unemployment in the lagging regions and among citizens with low qualifications. According to the OECD's Economic surveys of 2004, Slovakia has got the highest low-qualification-workers' unemployment rate, one of the highest unemployment rate among low-age-groups of workers and the lowest unemployment rate of people in the age range of 55 to 64. Besides the high level of youth unemployment, the rate of citizens within the age range of 15 to 19, who neither study nor work, is also among the highest in the OECD, standing at the level of 25 per cent. (In: Economic Surveys OECD 2004. Slovak Republic, p. 116–118. Available on the Internet.) (In: Ekonomické prehľady OECD 2004. Slovenská republika, p. 116–118.)

The unemployment rate considerably differs in relation to achieved education. For example, the rate of men in the age range from 25 to 64 in relation to unemployment fluctuates from 4.5per cent in the case of highly educated men to 44 per cent in the case of people without a complete secondary education. (In: Economic surveys OECD 2004. Slovak Republic, p. 118. Available on the Internet.) (In: Ekonomické prehľady OECD 2004. Slovenská republika, p. 118.)

The unemployment rate of the population in relation to achieved education in the Slovak Republic and in the countries of the European Union is referred in Table number 1.

**Tab. 1 Unemployment rate of the whole population according to the level of education (in %)**

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Without education, basic, lower secondary education (level 0–2, ISCED 1997)								
EU (25)	–	–	11,7	10,3	10,7	11,1	11,4	11,4
EU (15)	12,5	12,0	10,9	9,3	9,8	10,2	10,4	10,3
SR	24.5	30.1	37.3	38.3	42.6	44.6	48.9	50.0
Higher secondary education, not higher education ( level 3–4, ISCED 1997)								
EU (25)	–	–	8.0	7.6	8.0	8.2	8.4	8.1
EU (15)	8.5	7.6	6.8	6.1	6.4	6.9	7.1	7.0
SR	8.8	11.8	14.8	15.0	14.3	13.2	15.1	13.1
Higher education (level 5–6, ISCED 1997)								
EU (25)	–	–	4.4	3.9	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.6
EU (15)	6.9	5.2	4.4	3.9	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.7
SR	2.9	3.8	4.1	4.4	3.0	3.0	4.7	4.2

Source: Eurostat, own compilation. Available on the Internet: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,45323734&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/C/C4/C42&language=en&product=Yearlies\\_new\\_population&root=Yearlies\\_new\\_population&scrollto=613](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/C/C4/C42&language=en&product=Yearlies_new_population&root=Yearlies_new_population&scrollto=613)

According to the data from Table 1 it is obvious that the unemployment of the population with the lowest level of education reached nearly five times the average in the European Union member states in 2005. It is a long-term trend. The unemployment rate of the population with an achieved higher secondary form of education (not higher education) reached 13.1 per cent the same period, twice the average reached in the former EU member states. The population with finished higher education represents the lowest unemployment rate. This rate has been even lower in recent years in comparison with the average of the EU countries.

The lower education, the higher the rate of unemployment. This fact also applies to long-term unemployment, which reaches the highest level at the lowest level of education. With regard to age, the middle-age population mainly in the age range 35 to 39 and 45–49 constitutes risk groups.

As there is a proved interrelation between the level of achieved education and employment, “harmonization of the labour market and educational system is

necessary. Low wages and unemployment mainly influence people with the lowest education. And vice versa, education and a great range of skills, willingness and ability to acquire knowledge act as an assumption and guarantee of success on the labour market.” (In: Analysis of the European countries’ policies, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland focusing on the creation of new jobs. Bratislava: SHV 2000, p. 67.) (In: Analýza politík krajín Európskej únie, Českej Republiky, Maďarska a Poľska zameraných na tvorbu nových pracovných miest. Bratislava: SHV 2000, p. 67.)

A young qualified person is not only able to find a job more easily but in case of its loss he or she is more flexible and chooses a new profession or changes a domicile better. “There is an unequivocally proved connection between education and workforce demand and supply” the higher education level an individual reached, the better chances to find a job, or to find a better qualified jobs he has.“ (In: Analysis of the European countries’ policies, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are focusing on the creation of new jobs. Bratislava: SHV 2000, p.67.) (In: Analýza politík krajín Európskej únie, Českej Republiky, Maďarska a Poľska zameraných na tvorbu nových pracovných miest. Bratislava: SHV 2000, s. 67.) The educational level of population and constant growth of qualifications is one of the basic assumptions for the development of national economy and at the same time it is a condition leading to the increase of the labour market flexibility and employment.

## **1.2 Unemployment of university graduates and secondary school leavers**

University graduates and secondary schools leavers represent a specific group among the unemployed. Graduates and school-leavers represent a risk group that is disadvantaged on the labour market because of their lack of work experience. But in comparison with older workers these have a whole range of advantages as they are more flexible, they have a better attitude to information technology, they speak foreign languages, etc. It all increases their work value on the labour market and their competition skills mainly after graduating from universities. “There is an unequivocal link between the level of education and obtaining a job: the higher the graduate’s or school-leaver’s level of education, the easier he/she will find a job.” (Vojtech, J. – Ulovcová, H. – Trhliková, J., 2003, p. 63)

Table 2 depicts the structure of registered unemployed graduates and school-leavers according to the kind of school and the level of achieved education as well as the number development of the registered unemployed university graduates.

**Table 2. A record of unemployed university graduates and school-leavers according to the kind and level of education**

Level of achieved education		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Apprenticeship – medium without final examination	(2,3)	11316	8732	6574	9252	8803	8200
Engineering Training Institution with final examination	(4)	8134	7634	7847	11338	7741	6222
Grammar schools	(5)	3927	2988	1574	2115	1030	1422
Completed secondary specialized schools	(6)	14962	13798	9358	12692	8025	8490
Higher specialized schools	(7)	449	503	478	734	524	522
Universities	(8,9,10)	4600	4603	4483	5964	5073	4134
<b>Total (data till September)</b>		<b>43338</b>	<b>38258</b>	<b>30314</b>	<b>42 095</b>	<b>31196</b>	<b>28990</b>

Source: own compilation. The Office for Work, Social Issues and Family. Bratislava: 2005.

The data shown in Table 2 imply that there is a majority of secondary school-leavers mainly from specialized secondary schools with a final examination in the structure of the registered unemployed. Generally, the unemployed graduates and school-leavers are represented by the unemployed secondary school-leavers who amount to 80 per cent and the unemployed graduates who amount to 20 per cent while the latter are mostly short-term unemployed. The unemployment of university graduates and school-leavers has been declining mainly after 2002. An important factor that influences the labour market is job preparation. On the one hand, job offer is temporarily decreased by the number of students; on the other hand, the number of graduates and school-leavers newly entering the labour market makes it increase.

An overlarge number of university graduates and secondary school leavers in certain fields is reflected in the saturation of workforce offer and decrease of possibilities for those who would like to find a job in the field. Restructuring is necessary if we want to approach the educational level of the developed European countries and to harmonize the content of the educational system with the labour market. Structural changes in national economy have not been effective for job creation. The restructuring, yet uncompleted, which is heading towards more developed technologies with higher production, is one of the main causes for qualified workforce demand. On the other hand, many fields of study are old-fashioned, thus worsening the chance to obtain a job on the labour market. As the unemployment rate is particularly high among young people in the age group of 15–24 it would be appropriate to integrate more unemployed young people of this age group into the educational system. If approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the whole number of

155 thousand people in this age group were be included in further education, it would make a drop of the unemployed by about 100 thousand and thus unemployment would be decreased by 4 per cent. That is the reason why it is important to increase possibilities of first-degree university education.

In comparison with the OECD countries the young people's unemployment rate in the age range of 15 to 24 is approximately three times higher, while the difference in unemployment rate is substantially lower, standing at the level of 38 per cent. The Slovak Republic must therefore put more effort in order to create new job posts for young people and to increase further educational possibilities. "Young people's high rate of employment is the indicator of a successful mixture of policies: quality education process which offers knowledge and skills demanded on the labour market, flexibility of the labour market and mobility of workforce; and a business environment that attracts investment and supports the creation of job posts and generates innovation. On the other hand, high unemployment rate among the youth points at remaining educational problems, unsuitable motivation on the part of social defence system as well as a low creation of job posts." (In: Report of Millennium Development Programmes. OCED Employment Outlook 2003, p. 58–59.) (In: Správa o miléniových rozvojových programmeoch. OCED Employment Outlook 2003, p. 58–59.)

A general review of the unemployment development in the transition period from 1990 until now implies that the absence of a pragmatic developed economic policy that would lead to the creation of permanent job post opportunities in the economy of the Slovak Republic may be considered as the biggest problem.

## **2. Unemployment rate of graduates studying at universities with economic specialization**

After 1989 there has been rapid development in the context of the Slovak higher education as well as of universities with economic specialization on which we will, in accordance with the aim of this contribution and the author's professional field, mainly focus our attention. The number of the Faculties of Economics increased from 6 in 1991 to 15 in 2000. Nowadays there are 20 of them. (In: Slovak Higher Education in Numbers and Graphs. Bratislava, 2005) (In: Slovenské vysoké školstvo v číslach a grafoch. Bratislava, 2005)

The number of students has increased three times, from 5 979 in 1991 to 17 941 in 2000; that means by 264.5 per cent. The rapid development of economic higher education in the Slovak Republic has been caused by many reasons leading to high demand for graduates from secondary economic schools and faculties. It was not

only caused by their low number in the previous period but also to a high degree by economic restructure which has shifted from the primary and secondary area to tertiary, and further by the development of private business environment as a result of the transition from the socialist central planned economy to market economy as well as for other reasons. The rapid increase of the graduates with economic education gradually met demand for this workforce and as in other areas it has led to certain overproduction of graduates with economic education on the labour market. Monitoring of unemployed graduates is conducted in the Slovak Republic by the Office of Work, Social Issues and Family (until 2004 National Work Office), including graduates with economic specializations. Graduates' unemployment is traditionally high in the regions with a high level of unemployment.

From the survey of the number and structure of job applicants among graduates measured by the level of achieved education, completion of studies in a chosen field and length of registration in the Slovak Republic it is concluded that "Social science and service" among which economic fields are included together with "Technical science" (mainly engineering and other metal-processing manufacture) belong to the biggest "producers" of unemployed people nowadays. The survey of graduates' number and structure from May 2004 is featured in Table 3.

**Table 3. The survey of graduates' and school-leavers' number and structure according to achieved education, completed field of study and the length of registration in the Slovak Republic (data as to May 2004) – in accordance with ISCED classification.**

Field of study group		Total (people)	Level of achieved education									
No.	Name		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(a)	(b)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
1	<i>Natural science</i>	300	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	285	4
2,3	<i>Technical science</i>	7 728	0	0	3753	0	1982	0	1059	77	854	3
4	<i>Agricultural-wood and veterinary science</i>	1 489	0	0	472	0	329	0	300	32	356	0
5	<i>Medical and pharmaceutical science</i>	566	0	0	29	5	0	0	206	59	263	4
6,7	<i>Social science and service</i>	7 150	0	0	1933	13	931	657	1805	160	1648	3
8	<i>Art and culture science</i>	343	0	0	48	0	88	0	100	21	85	1
9	<i>Military and security science</i>	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	36	0



Field of study group		Total (people)	Level of achieved education									
No.	Name		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	<i>Other fields of education</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
0	<i>Without further professional education</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total = 1+2,3+4+5+6,7+8+9+0=d1+d2+d3+d4</i>		17 617	0	0	6235	18	3330	657	3475	359	3528	15

Resource: Office of Work, Social Issues and Family. Bratislava: 2004.

According to the data in Table 3 it is evident that “Technical science” produces the highest number of job applicants, amounting to 7728 and comprising all levels of education. Engineering and other metal-processing manufacture are the most risky fields of study at SOU, (Professional Engineering Apprenticeship), with 1717 applicants and others including 494 from higher education fields of study.

According to the number of job applicants, second place belongs to “Social science and service”, which also includes economic fields. Within the latter the highest number of the unemployed school-leavers comes from the fields of study at SOU, number 64 “Economics and Organization, Trade and Service”. Next is the field of study number 63 “Economics and Organization, Trade and Service” at the level of secondary and higher education with 1 746 unemployed graduates and school-leavers. In the study field number 62 “Economic science” that includes secondary and higher education there were 633 graduate and school-leaver job applicants. Another risk group in the area of social-scientific fields of study is “teaching”, with 655 graduate job applicants. Developing unemployment tendencies of graduates and school-leavers from economic fields in the Slovak Republic in 1999-2004 are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Number development of registered unemployed graduates and school-leavers from economic fields of study**

A group of fields of study		Years					
Number	Name	09.1999	09.2000	09.2001	09.2002	09.2003	09.2004
62	Economic science	847	796	842	1 004	992	662
63	Economics and Organization, Trade and Service	6 971	6 923	4 662	5 180	3918	4 106
64	Economics and Organiz., Trade and Service (specialized studies at SOU)	4 883	3 801	3 773	5 002	4894	4 682
62,63,64	Economic science in total	12 701	11 520	9 277	11 186	9 804	9 450

A group of fields of study		Years					
Number	Name	09.1999	09.2000	09.2001	09.2002	09.2003	09.2004
0-9	All fields in total	43 338	38 258	30 314	38 939	31 196	28 990
62,63,64	Economic fields in percentage from a total number of registered unemployed	29.3 %	30.1 %	30.6%	28.7%	31.4%	32.6%

Resource: Own compilation. The Office of Work, Social Issues and Family. Bratislava: 2005.

**Table 5. Development of the numbers of unemployed graduates and school-leavers from economic fields of study with regard to the length of registration (data as in September)**

Years	Less than 3 months			3(4)–6 months			(6)7–9 months			(9)10–12 months			12–15 months					
1999	166	2 445	2 269	674	4 511	2 577	6	8	11	1	7	26	–	–	–			
2000	155	3 475	1 847	636	3 439	1 925	2	5	6	3	4	23	–	–	–			
2001	136	2 450	1 781	704	2 206	1 980	1	4	5	1	2	7	0	0	0			
2002	288	2 684	2 214	829	2 274	2 088	10	210	186	13	149	150	16	461	448			
2003	282	1 727	2 239	635	1 369	1 724	12	116	154	4	84	96	9	252	284			
2004	198	3 130	3 376	397	383	405	26	132	196	5	68	91	12	197	270			
Fields of study	62 – Economic Science			63 – Economics and Organization; Trade and Service			64 – Economics and Organization, Trade and Service (fields of study) SOU			62 – Economic Science			63 – Economics and Organization; Trade and Service			64 – Economics and Organization, Trade and Service (fields of study) SOU		
Years	15–8 months			18–21 months			21–24 months			More than 24 months			Total number of the unemployed					
1999	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	847	8 665	4 883			
2000	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	796	8 515	3 801			
2001	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	842	6 346	3 773			
2002	46	520	509	2	2	1	0	2	4	0	0	0	1 204	8 710	5 600			
2003	49	370	396	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	992	5 902	4 894			
2004	23	195	343	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	662	5 431	4 682			

Resource: Own compilation. The Office of Work, Social Issues and Family. Bratislava: 2005.

According to the data in Table 4 it is evident that the number development of the registered unemployed graduates and school-leavers from economic fields was oscillating or decreasing in 1999–2004. It concerns mainly graduates and school-leavers from the study fields “Economic science“ (62) and “Economics and Organization, Trade and Service“ (63), where in 2003 and 2004 there was a significant decrease of the unemployed graduates and school-leavers in comparison with 1999. And on the contrary, in the study fields “Economics and Organization, Trade and Service“ (study fields at SOU – 64) there was an increase in the number of the registered unemployed school-leavers. On average, within economic fields (62,63,64), there is a clearly decreasing tendency in the numbers of registered unemployed graduates and school-leavers in the years 1999–2004, a trend that can be considered as positive. From the total number of the registered unemployed graduates and school-leavers, economic fields constituted approximately 30 per cent and in 2004 it was 32.6 per cent – a relatively high number. It is a problem that indisputably necessitates more attention on the part of secondary schools and universities with economic specialization. The number of the development of registered graduates and school-leavers from economic fields with regard to the length of registration is shown in Table 5.

The data presented in Table 5 indicate that the majority of the unemployed graduates and school-leavers from the economic fields of study in relation to the length of registration belong to those short-term unemployed with unemployment duration of up to 6 months. Afterwards their numbers were rapidly decreasing as visible 1999 and 2001. A gradual increase of unemployment from 7 months and up is typical of the year 2002. And again in 2003 and 2004 there was an obvious decrease of the unemployed graduates and school-leavers in this category.

## **Summary**

Unemployment belongs to the most serious negative impacts of the transitional processes in the Slovak Republic following the year 1989. Unemployment rates belong among the highest within the European Union and the OECD. Citizens with a low level of education and qualification suffer most from the highest long-term unemployment. As there is an indirect interrelation between unemployment and education (the lower education, the higher unemployment) investments aimed at education and qualifications of citizens are the most important tools of active state policy of the labour market. Increase in citizens’ educational level and growth in qualification are not only important determinants of success on the labour market but also they support national economic development.

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